

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 2083

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0509

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : OTRA, BA

SUBJECT : NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE VISIT BAHRAIN

1. TOP GOB LEADERSHIP EXTENDED ITSELF TO RECEIVE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE GROUP AND SEEMED TO ENJOY DOING SO. DELEGATION FROM GROUP PAID "COURTESY" CALL ON AMIR DURING WHICH PRIME MINISTER, CROWN PRINCE/DEFENSE MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER WERE PRESENT. SUBSEQUENTLY FOREIGN MINISTER, DEVELOPMENT MINISTER AND CROWN PRINCE/DEFENSE MINISTER ATTENDED ONE HOUR DISCUSSION SESSION WITH ENTIRE GROUP. BOTH MEETINGS PROVIDED INTERESTING EXCHANGE OF VIEWS.

2. WHILE BAHRAINI LEADERS SPOKE ALONG GENERALLY FAMILIAR LINES, THEIR PRESENTATIONS WERE NOTEWORTHY FOR: (A) AMIR'S CHARACTERISTIC STRESS ON DISTRUST OF SOVIET INTENTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND URGENCY OF MOVING ON TOWARD MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT WITH U.S. PLAYING LEADERSHIP ROLE IN ACHIEVING PEACE; (B) FOREIGN MINISTER'S EMPHASIS, IN BRIEFING SESSION WITH ENTIRE GROUP, ON OVERWHELMING INFLUENCE WHICH MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM PLAYS BOTH IN U.S.-ARAB AND INTER-ARAB RELATIONS. FOREIGN MINISTER, EXAGGERATING HIS ASSESSMENT SOMEWHAT FOR EFFECT, TRIED TO CONVEY TO GROUP SENSE THAT IF MIDDLE EAST PEACE CAN BE ACHIEVED, THERE ARE VIRTUALLY CLOUDLESS HORIZONS FOR ARAB-AMERICAN COOPERATION AND INTER-ARAB HARMONY AND SOCIAL/ECONOMIC PROGRESS; (C) DEVELOPMENT MINISTER'S CONFIDENT PROJECTIONS OF INCREASING ARAB ECONOMIC INFLUENCE AND ECONOMIC UNITY PLUS HIS OBSERVATION THAT, DESPITE THE STRAINS WHICH U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL HAS PLACED ON U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS, THE ARABS

AND THE U.S. HAVE NO SATISFACTORY ALTERNATIVE TO SEEKING CLOSER COOPERATION.

3. BOTH MEETINGS PROVIDED FASCINATING INSIGHT INTO THE AL-KHALIFA FAMILY SQUABBLING OVER HOW MUCH, IF ANY, DEFENSE MODERNIZATION BAHRAIN NEEDS. PRIME MINISTER STRESSED IMPORTANCE U.S. SUPPORT FOR BAHRAIN'S UNSPECIFIED EFFORTS TO IMPROVE ITS DEFENSE CAPABILITY. FOREIGN MINISTER STRESSED PRIORITY GOVERNMENT PLACES ON SOCIAL/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FRIENDLY FOREIGN RELATIONS, NOTING DEFENSE EXPENDITURE IN LOWEST ORDER OF PRIORITY. (COMMENT: THIS SEEMS TO BE "CABINET" VIEW AS OPPOSED TO PRIME MINISTER'S VIEW.) CROWN PRINCE/DEFENSE MINISTER OUTLINED SEVERAL FAIRLY SPECIFIC MODERNIZATION PROGRAMS, NONE OF WHICH TO OUR KNOWLEDGE HAVE ANY OFFICIAL STATUS, WHILE AMIR KEPT REPEATING REFRAIN OF HIS DISLIKE FOR MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS GENERALLY AND HIS LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR BUYING WEAPONS FOR BAHRAIN.

4. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE VISIT SEEMED TO BE USEFUL EXPERIENCE ALL AROUND, HIGHLIGHTED BY GOB LEADERS' DELIGHT THAT VISIT PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY FOR NWC COMMANDANT ADMIRAL BAYNE, REMEMBERED WITH GREAT ADMIRATION FROM HIS DAYS AS COMMANDER MIDDLE EAST FORCE, TO VISIT BAHRAIN ONCE AGAIN.
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